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ABSTRACT

This paper serves as an introduction to help librarians and teachers better understand and explain to others the scope of the Right to Read program, its many facets, and its demand for the right combination of professional and non-professional initiatives. Areas of activity which must be tackled to improve reading motivation, skill, and opportunity are: (1) public awareness of the direct and indirect problems for persons with reading deficiency and areas in which solutions may be effected; (2) administrative decision making that assigns priority to fostering reading skills and habits in the schools; (3) revision in the instruction and materials for preservice and inservice teacher education; (4) revisions in librarianship education with improved competencies in reading motivation and understanding of reading instruction and development; (5) improvements in school and public libraries' ability to provide full, realistic access to books; (6) development of programs that emphasize pre-reading skills and parent training; and (7) recruitment, training, and meaningful utilization of large numbers of volunteers and paraprofessionals in all aspects of reading development and access programs. (TO)

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# SOUND AND LIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO READ:

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This paper is intended to serve as an introduction, an appetizer, addressed primarily to librarians and teachers, to help them better understand and be able to explain to others the scope of the Right to Read program, its many facets, and its demand for the right combination of professional and non-professional initiatives.

What does the Right to Read really mean?

Like most important ideas it is a complex of many strands, many interpretations. Most people who are concerned with education at any level know by now that the Right to Read has been for many months a challenge, a concept in search of concrete action, a long range objective in search of some initial steps. "By the end of the 1970's the Right to Read shall be a reality for all -- that no one shall be leaving our schools without the skill and the desire necessary to read to the full limits of his capability." This one short sentence has, it seems, raised many questions: what might the reality of a Right to Read be? What is the best way to teach skill in reading? Even more difficult, how do you instill desire? How can we be sure what the limits of his capability really are?

There are no easy answers. There is as yet no special appropriation of funds at the federal level, although the Right to Read has been accorded some priority status for the allocation of monies from existing federal programs. Adult illiteracy and the need for developing reading ability in children is recognized as a major component of the problems of the disadvantaged. There is stepped up planning and activity going on at the national level: within the U.S. Office of Education a research, development and coordination program is being carried out by a special Office under the direction of Dr. Ruth Love Holloway, formerly of the California State Department of Education, ably assisted by Miss Julia Hamblet; and just outside of, but working closely with, the Office of Education, the National Reading Center has been set up as the physical presence of the Presidentially appointed National Reading Council, a diverse group of citizens headed by AT & T Vice President Walter Straley as Chairman, and former school superintendent Dr. Donald Emery as Executive Director. Through the Reading Center, emphasis will be placed on demonstrations of techniques and materials, and also the recruitment, training and utilization of volunteers in the reading improvement program. (The National Reading Center is no longer functioning.)

In addition, several organizations have declared the Right to Read as a major program emphasis, among them the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, which launched their Reading Improvement Services Everywhere (RISE) with a national workshop in 1970 for PTA state leaders and officials from their state education agencies; the International Reading Association and the American Library Association which have strongly endorsed the objectives and goals of the effort and have set to work to inspire, inform and

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involve their own members throughout the country so that they can take initiatives and serve as leaders and resource people in their states and communities.

At the state level, several states have set up task forces or committees made up of professional and citizen leaders to identify reading gaps and actions required that are specific to their own states. Arizona, Connecticut, North Carolina and Ohio are among the states furthest along the road to action at the present time.

But when all is said and done, it is probably futile to wait for national or state action, especially for funding. Assessment, inventorying and planning do not call for great sums of money, yet they must precede the effective use of funds. Evolving a concept of the job to be done and identifying some sequential steps in getting it done can be accomplished, must be accomplished, on a state by state, community by community, district by district, school by school, classroom by classroom, family by family and child by child, basis.

Where to start? Perhaps with professionals coming to some common understanding of terms, of philosophy, of the assumptions that underlie the long-range objective.

There is, to begin with, the assumption that the skill and the desire to read are rights for every child, not the privileges of children born only into certain homes, certain national or racial groups, certain school districts. The Right to Read rests upon the right to a sense of identity that stimulates aspiration and the right to the encouragement and reinforcement that we all need in order to achieve. The Right to Read is the right to the kind of reading instruction that takes into account an individual's preparation and readiness, the amount and quality of home support and help available to him, his coordination and his self-concept. The Right to Read is the right to have the necessary degree of language and concept development that makes it possible to learn to read. The Right to Read is the right of convenient access to a wide range of interesting books to read as skill develops.

The Right to Read is part of the right of inquiry -- the tool of self-determination, of intellectual growth, of meaningful work and upward mobility. To read is to interpret, and it relates to more than just print. One reads an expression, a situation, the message of a TV commercial, or the convictions of a news commentator with the degree of precision and clarity developed and exercised by decoding print symbols.

So the Right to Read is the right to motivation; the right to reinforcement of effort; the right to personalized instruction in skills developed by a variety and combination of methods and media; and the right to fingertip access to books through libraries, paperback book racks, books in the bathroom and under the bed to practice on -- this is the reality of the Right to Read, and these the elements that make it possible.

Reading is like almost any other habit good or bad: the more you do it, the better you get at it; the better you get at it, the more you like it. Conversely, the less well you do it, the less you are apt to like it, and the harder it gets. Reading skill atrophies like all unused skills, and all too often the thinking, idea-forming, interpreting mechanism atrophies too.

What will it take to make this bundle of rights encompassed by the Right to Read real to every American child? A great deal. Money, of course. But a number of other things, too, if the money is to effect real progress.

First of all, people in many and varied positions of leadership responsibility must face the facts: there is a nationwide reading problem and it is getting worse. It does not afflict only children from ghetto, reservation or migrant homes. Every classroom teacher and every parent must come to understand the elements of reading success and the early warning symptoms of reading difficulty and failure, and they must know what can be done to deal with the latter before the remedial or problem stage is reached.

Many people, amazing though it seems, may even need to be convinced that reading disability constitutes a serious lifetime handicap. Reading failure is not just a school failure, to be blithely dismissed on encounter with the real world of opportunity, personal development and parenthood. It hampers, narrows, prevents, precludes, excludes throughout a lifetime. Ask any functionally illiterate adult. Middle class sophistry may ask, Who needs it? We are in the computer age now, the space age, the age of sight and sound happenings. But poor people know better. They know that their children will need reading skill and experience, and the thinking skill it helps to sharpen, and they are fiercely determined to get it for them.

People are needed who can identify who and what need to be changed in order to close the reading gap. A new standard of literacy, of reading expectation, must be devised. Curriculum priorities must be analyzed and revised. Teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, must focus on the teaching of reading and the means and materials of practice. Library facilities, service programs and personnel must be expanded and permitted to become more responsive in providing books, other media and motiviation to newly made readers.

Legions of paraprofessionals and community volunteers, foster grandparents as well as high school and college age tutors must be recruited and trained to assist young readers-in-the-making; to give focus to understanding, to read aloud, to talk about what they are reading and how it relates to other things; and to overcome hang-ups, fears of failure, boredom and discouragement. Parents must be helped to grasp the vital and rather easy-to-perform role that they can play with their preschool children and their beginning and even older readers to motivate, connect, relate, listen and cultivate reading desire and skills.

Parents of preschool children must be made aware of the importance of their potenial as "first teacher," forging the springboard to later learning and reading ease from concepts and skills acquired through such TV programs as Sesame Street and other exposures. Teachers and librarians, as the professionals most centrally concerned with reading, will need to work with daycare center and Headstart personnel, public health and welfare center staffs, so that little bits of their own expertise and knowledge of resources will spin off in a "multiplier effect" and everyone can help a little with the getting-ready-to-read job in the home and the neighborhood.

There is a major job in the Right to Read effort, too, for persuaders and communicators: writers, speakers (or just plain talkers), demonstrators, and doers. The good old newspaperman's questions are still valid: the what, why, who, where, when and how of the reading question need to become the priority concern of organizations and agencies on national, state and local levels. A sequential plan of attack and action should be laid out by any organization or individual who wants to start, a plan that is dovetailed with the work being planned or done by others or as an incitement to stir them into activity.

The Right to Read will only be made real eventually for every child through team effort, but the initiative and guidance must come from those who share, most directly, the professional responsibility for the development of lifetime reading habits: the teacher and the librarian. This means the classroom teacher and the reading specialist, the school and the public librarian. Each has expertise in one of the elements that will make the Right to Read a reality, a personal reality, for each child:

1. The development of reading skills -- the technical ability to decode and comprehend;
2. the desire, the motivation to read, a reason to want to read;
3. access to plenty of books to read as skills are being mastered.

All these take people -- a supporting cast of thousands -- to support and extend the efforts of the professionals and of the children themselves. After all, the whole society, not educators alone, has been involved in creating the reading problem and must be involved in solving it.

The Right to Read program will be a process: of inventory and assessment, of trial and error, of testing and evaluation, of measuring what is needed against what exists to enable people to read. One begins by understanding how basic the Right to Read is, how many are deprived and how inextricably related are the lements that make it possible. Then, if you ascertain that the Right to Read is unrealized -- limited, curtailed, imperfect, incomplete in any of its aspects for any child within your shere of influence, responsiblity or activity, and you can, as a first step, identify why this is so, you have already begun.

What will it take to close the gap between full reading opportunity for each child and what is now available to him?

The overall objectives of this paper are to help you to define, describe and restructure some of the professional, paraprofessional and public roles and responsibilities that must be taken to shape meaningful, measurable change in reading opportunity. Necessary to the task are:

1. Ability to inventory current roles, resources and levels and quality of achievement (by pupils, teachers, families, neighborhood, etc.).
2. Knowledge of current professional skills, techniques and materials;
3. Commitment to change and willingness to look first for changes in organization and structure that might result in reordered priorities and better use of resources (time, staff, materials) rather than simply "more" (money, personnel) with which to do more of the same.

The following are some possible objectives in seven large areas of activity which, in our opinion, will have to be tackled if real improvement in reading motivation, skill and opportunity is to be achieved:

1. Public awareness of the direct and indirect problems created for people by reading deficiency and key areas in which solutions to the problem may be effected; also, a new and higher standard of literacy for today's society and understanding of the social, economic and personal implication of reading mastery in all that mastery implies in terms of creative competence.
2. Administrative decision-making that results in the assignment of curriculum priority to fostering reading skills and habits in the elementary and the secondary schools, and resulting major changes in curriculum planning and scheduling.
3. Revisions in the management of reading skill building and instruction in the use of materials in teacher education, both pre-service and in-service.
4. Revisions in the program of education for librarianship, resulting in improved competencies relating to reading motivation, and thorough understanding of how reading skills are learned and developed.
5. Exponential improvements in school and public librarians' ability to provide full, realistic access to books and other materials and the motivation to use them, by working directly with users and indirectly through supporting the work and program services of other agencies.
6. Development of early childhood programs that emphasize pre-reading skills -- conceptual, perceptual and verbal -- and parent training programs toward this end.
7. Recruitment, training and meaningful utilization of great numbers of volunteers, paid volunteers and paraprofessionals in all aspects of reading development and access programs, to help not just with "tutoring" or reading skill building alone, but with motivation, the development of concepts, the telling and reading of stories, the shaping of each child's self image as a reader, a thinker, a maker of choices, decisions and his own destiny and that of his society.

Most of the time thus far in the Right to Read program we have talked about children and their Right to Read. Sould we not, people ask, be equally concerned with the millions of functionally or fully illiterate adults -- many of them the parents of these same children -- who are denied the benefits of reading ability and are helping to bequeath the disability to their children? Certainly, of course, the answer is an unqualified "yes", if for no other reason than that the "circular" quality of reading competence requires adults -- parents and others -- who value and practice reading ability. But of course that is not the only reason: the economy, the social fabric, as well as the personal aspirations, the very survival perhaps, of millions of illiterate adults, demand our concern and action. But our immediate goal, achievement of which may well take the entire decade of the seventies, is to break the cycle of generation-to-generation disability by starting with the children and young people so that henceforth and hopefully forever, "no one shall be leaving our schools without the skill and the desire necessary to read to the full limits . . ."

But the truth is, and we know it, but fear to risk despair and failure if we admit it too readily, that we shall probably, as we get into it, find ourselves moving on all fronts at once -- assuring the children's Right to Read, in part, by trying to remedy the reading disability of so many of the adults who people their world.

For the long, long-range objective in building a nation of habitual, confident readers is the means of serving social and individual purposes that are immeasurably larger. Reading can help the reader to enlarge his world, to realize his potential excellence, savor his leisure and find new meaning in his work. In the belief that reading and the Right to Read, with all that it implies, is a means toward the full pursuit of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness lies the ultimate goal: to achieve an informed, creative citizenry that is competent and willing to think, to make choices and the decisions that free men and women have the privilege and the responsibility to make.

## COMMUNITY READING INVENTORY: TWENTY ONE QUESTIONS

A well planned program of reading development needs to begin with knowing where to start. What is the size and shape of the reading problem in your community, be it town or city, county school district or state?

In general, it is useful to know or to find out through surveys, interviews and facts gathered from a variety of sources, something about: 1) the present status and level of reading efficiency among both children and adults, and 2) what reading resources are available in the community, including both instructional programs and materials.

Remember that when you seek improvements in the implementation of the community's Right to Read there are going to be -- there should be -- people who want to know why improvements are necessary. Among the skeptics and the challengers, if your efforts are successful, will be influential authority figures from the political, economic and educational leadership as well as newspapers, civic groups, parents and taxpayers. You will need to have facts to show them that what exists in the way of resources does not provide the Right to Read in all its aspects for all the children or adults in the community.

Gauging the Status of Reading Efficiency

In trying to assess the literacy level or reading efficiency level of the community, it is important to get points of view and facts from diverse sources, outside of the schools as well as within them. It may be that certain professionals within the school systems have developed a greater tolerance for reading failure than is acceptable to the work world outside the school. Sights and expectations can be raised by unaccustomed dialogues between reading teachers, supervisors and other school people, and employers and personnel folk. These are, of course, delicate matters and inquiries; sharing and pooling of viewpoints must be carried out with the utmost tact and care, so that everyone understands that the whole Right to Read effort must be carried out through collaboration between the schools and all concerned public and private segments of the community. It is most important to emphasize and re-emphasize that the total community shares the responsibility for whatever has gone wrong; it is not the fault of the schools alone, or a particular instructional method that they may or may not have been using. In other words, "The name of the game is sharing the blame and erasing the shame!" While there may be enormous sensitivity to inventory, measurement, comparisons, ratings and accountability in general much of the problem is a "hidden" one. Not all of the following may be applicable to every situation, but here are some general directions for questions to which you may want answers:

1. What percentage of the community's adults -- over 18 years of age -- can be classified as illiterate or functionally illiterate -- that is, disabled on the job or in life situations by reading deficiency?

2. What percentage of the secondary school students -- junior high and high school -- are having difficulty because of reading problems?

3. What percentage of the community or junior college or technical school students are in trouble because of reading problems?

4. What is the drop-out rate from junior high and high school? In what percentage of these cases do principals and other school officials estimate that reading failure is a factor?

5. What relationship between crime patterns and illiteracy has been observed by police and court officials?

6. Get points of view about the overall and specific reading competence of persons in your community from such people as, for instance: welfare workers; the personnel director of a local plant; a newspaper reporter; the state employment service branch; the local bureau of motor vehicles. If some of the people with whom the above come in contact do not appear to be functional readers and thinkers, what do they think is the reason for this deficiency?

7. Be sure to talk with all of the types of professional people in the schools who deal with reading, especially reading specialists and librarians, but also curriculum planners and principals, subject supervisors and classroom teachers in the primary grades. Get their slant on what they think they are doing well or poorly, what factors are limiting their best efforts, and what improvements could be made.

8. Check out, at least on a spot check basis, newspaper subscriptions; newsstand and paperback rack sales; magazine subscriptions; library cards held and their frequency of use; bookstore sales. Do residents of certain neighborhoods, students or graduates of certain schools, appear to read more and with more satisfaction than others?

Checking Out the Reading Resources: People, Programs and Materials

9. What requirements are made of elementary school teachers concerning their knowledge of how to teach reading and how to select and use a great variety of books and other materials in the classroom?

10. Do your schools have reading specialists on the staff? Do they work with and through the classroom teachers as well as directly with children who have reading problems? Do they do in-service work with teachers singly? In groups? Is in-service work voluntary or required on the part of the teachers? After school, or on release time during the day or when?

11. What is the diagnostic and prescriptive process in reading instruction for all children entering school? What is the referral process for children who seem to be having trouble? How is instruction handled during the school day?

12. What individual attention from subject teachers and reading specialists is available to junior high and high school students?

13. What can you find about the community's preschool programs in terms of their deliberate development of pre-reading skills? Make a check of kindergarten, pre-kindergarten, nursery school, daycare, Head-start and other programs, both public and private, to see what is going on in terms of developing verbal skills, recognition of letters, sounds, colors, shapes, numbers, and other conceptual and reasoning skills?

14. Is there any parent training going on in support of reading and pre-reading skills especially among the parents of preschool and elementary school children?

15. What kinds of outside-of-school or informal school-related tutoring or motivation programs are going on? Who is involved? Who is training these helpers, and with what goals in mind? Is there any systematic evaluation of the training programs and the volunteers performance?

16. What kinds of reading programs are available for out-of-school young adults and adults in the community (over 18): Public high school adult education classes? Private reading clinics? Industry sponsored programs? Programs and classes in other agencies, such as public libraries?

17. How extensive are the book ownership resources of the community? Are there bookstores with wide selections beyond current best-sellers? Conveniently located paperback bookstores, newsstands and stationery stores with good general "backlist" stocks?

18. Most important, how extensive, how interconnected and accessible are the libraries available to community residents? Are public library outlets -- branches, stations, bookmobiles -- located where people live and work? Do locations move and change to keep up with user needs? Do open hours include some nights, Saturdays, Sundays? Is there a minimum of rules, restrictions and red tape set up between the library's books and other materials and those who would use them? Does organization of print and non-print materials make sense to the non-specialist user?

19. Does each school building in the community have a centralized library/media center with supply lines into every part of the school building? Is use of the center restricted by hours, pupil schedule, shortage of staff? Are the services of a qualified professional library media specialist available to all children enrolled in the schools including kindergarten and preschool programs? Are qualified school library media specialists supported by clerical and semi-professional staff and services such as centralized processing? Do teachers receive constant in-service support from library staff members and are library staff members involved in all instructional program planning?

20. Does each institution of higher education or adult education in the community have its own planned and formalized library service component which has responsibility for supporting the work of its students? Adult evening classes? Basic adult education classes? Technical school? Extension class of the college? Are instructors aware that they must supply, through their methods of instruction, most of the impetus for reading habit formation and practice?

21. Are library programs and services available to community residents that will motivate them to read and help develop a reading climate in the community? Are these programs and services available without great effort or special knowledge? Are they available through other agencies -- hospitals, daycare centers, senior citizen and community and neighborhood centers -- as well as directly on the streets, in the parks and in library buildings?

## SOME STEPS TOWARD OBJECTIVES BY READING PROFESSIONALS

Teachers and librarians are the reading professionals without whose constant creative guidance as a team, it seems highly unlikely that the Right to Read can succeed. The motivation and reinforcement of readers; the supervision and training of paraprofessionals and volunteers; the provision of print and non-print materials; the diagnosis and prescription of instructional strategies; the involvement of parents and the larger community -- all these tasks they must share, leaning more heavily now on the talents and training of one team member, now on those of another, but always mutually supportive and inextricably linked in the development of a reader. Spinning off from this collaboration of professionals, flowing from it, drawn into it, will come the interest, support and involvement of other professionals in education, parents and the public.

1. Public Awareness of Reading Problems and Possible Solutions

   A. Public awareness can begin to ferment inside the professional world and work outward. Arrange one-to-one and group-to-group contacts, exchanges and joint meetings of librarians and teachers to discuss roles in the Right to Read effort; get acquainted with the sphere of influence of organizations (e.g., The councils, local and regional librarians' groups) within the school system and the community, their self image, special techniques, etc. The school district reading supervisor, the school library/media supervisor and/or the appropriate public library person (community outreach librarian, work with children's supervisor, supervisor of branches or whoever) can start the ball rolling.

   B. Draw school administration, local businessmen, government officials, parents and civic leaders into the growing "circle of concern" for reading inadequacy and community inventory of reading level and reading resources.

   C. Disseminate findings and their implications for local action toward improvement through service club meetings, newspapers, radio and TV interviews and discussions. Encourage especially discussion of new and higher standards of literacy.

II. Curriculum Change and Priority for Reading

A. Discuss with principals and other school building leadership, cooperative planning to coordinate reading instruction with library use and provide reading laboratory experience and practice for all children, not only those with reading problems.

B. Work out diagnosis and individual prescription procedure for all beginning readers and involving classroom teachers.

C. Allocate expanded classtime to reading instruction in both elementary and secondary schools. Loosen up rigid schedules to provide more time for reading motivation, concept building and development or language skills that lead to reading. Clarify curriculum structure and reading goals for public librarians, parents and other agencies that work with children.

III. Teacher Education in the Teaching of Reading and Use of Materials

A. Work with teacher education institutions, the state education agency, unions, professional organizations and local administrators to the end that no teacher may be certified for service in either elementary or secondary schools without having completed required courses in the teaching of reading, the use of books and other materials, and teamwork with materials specialists.

B. Help to structure courses for new types of reading professionals at the supervisory and specialist level, who combine expertise in instructional methods and use of materials.

C. Assume increased leadership in providing regular, ongoing in-service workshops, mini workshops, and institutes for classroom and subject field teachers, principals and supervisors in the diagnosis and treatment of reading disabilities, motivation and reinforcement, evaluation and measurement of progress, etc.

IV. Librarian Education in Reading Motivation and Work with Teachers

A. Help to suggest revisions in library school education that will enable librarians to take up their full share of responsibility for reading improvement, through school and public libraries.

B. Insure that both school and public librarians understand instructional methods in the teaching of reading and arrange in-service courses, meetings and workshops to work out collaborative roles with reading teachers and other community agencies.

C. Work to insure that the roles of librarians in working for reading development with and through other agencies such as neighborhood centers, adult basic education classes and daycare centers, are understood.

V. Improvement in Library Resources and Services

A. Provide training in reading motivation -- storytelling, reading aloud, concept development with print and non-print materials -- for all elementary classroom teachers and professionals in other agencies that serve children and their families.

B. Provide library resources and services to undergird all types of reading instructional programs -- tutorial and adult basic education -- wherever they may occur.

C. Review and assess the usefulness of all beginning reading materials and motivational tools; disseminate lists of the best ones and provide assistance in their use; disseminate guidelines for multi-ethnic materials and their use.

VI. Development of Early Childhood Pre-reading Programs

A. Make a survey of your community, noting the existing preschool programs. How are they distributed -- do they tend to be concentrated in one area or to serve only one economic group? Determine where the need for daycare programs is greatest. Enlist help of existing daycare programs, city agencies, schools, etc., in developing daycare in these areas.

B. Assess developmental pre-reading programs carried on in kindergartens, daycare centers, nursery schools and Headstart. Do they have adequate materials and a professional staff? Are they accredited by the city or state? Is the development of language skills and exposure to books an important part of the program? What other agencies can be involved in the program: can the librarians help in supplying books or in training volunteers and other personnel in storytelling and picture book use? Can the children visit interesting parts of the city?

C. Determine if parents are aware of the value of the preschool program, and hold orientation sessions and parent-teacher sessions. Provide follow-up hints of things for parents to do with their children when at home. Try to stimulate parents to use the library for books and other materials that will help their pre-schooler.

VII. Recruitment, Training and Meaningful Utilization of Volunteers

A. Before recruiting volunteers, analyze the type of person that is needed -- should he be a member of the community in which he will work or can he come from outside the community? Would it be best to use an older person or another student? Is the program designed to help the volunteer improve his skills as well as the other participant's? Will he be needed on a regular basis or not?

B. What are the techniques to use in recruiting volunteers -- newspaper announcements, cooperation with other organizations, community and church groups, PTA's, etc. Determin which methods best

serve your needs. If volunteers have particular skills, try to use them to advantage. Are you able to put the volunteers' desires and your needs together? If one volunteer does not work out in a situation, do not jeopardize the program; try to find something he can do. Have you got a central staff person to coordinate volunteer activities?

C. Determine exactly what you want the volunteer or paraprofessional to do, before he is on the job. Work closely with the professional who will use the volunteer in determining how to train the volunteer to his task. Volunteers should not begin working in any reading program without some prior training. Has he become familiar with the materials he will have to use? Is he prepared to work in groups or with individuals? Is there a resource person on hand to give him assistance if he needs it? To whom will he be directly responsible? Is he oriented to the physical layout in which he will work? Does he know where to get additional materials he might need?

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROUPS WHO MUST BE CENTRALLY CONCERNED WITH CLOSING THE READING GAP

### The Local Administrator

The ultimate long-range success of the Right to Read program's implementation as a top national priority rests with the local school. Each local school district has the major role in carrying out any program recommended on the national or state level. While federal agencies establish the Right to Read as a national priority and national and state activities dramatize and define the scope and purpose of the Right to Read, stimulating, financing and evaluating approaches and results, meaningful local variations are necessary because of regional independence and local diversity. Successful implementation of the program requires leadership and guidance in curriculum development; the stimulation of teaching potential; flexibility and innovation in scheduling activities and acquiring materials; the formation of strong teams of teaching generalists and specialists; and the involvement of the entire community.

Major Steps

- the local administrator must commit himself to the Right to Read program
  - realize and believe that making the Right to Read real for every child in his system is basic to the solution of other instructional problems
  - relate the conquest of reading to the community: the needs of local industry; the concern of ghetto parents over child failure; the frustrations of teachers of other subjects with children who cannot read; upheaval and alienation of failed readers

- the local administrator must prepare himself to answer questions
  - get briefed by top curriculum staff person, reading specialist and school librarian
  - arrange for demonstration of new reading materials and aids
  - study case histories of successful application of new methods and technology

- outline the objectives of the Right to Read program and build a task force to implement them
  - utilize curriculum specialists, supervisors, teachers, librarians, remedial and enrichment specialists
  - implement flexible scheduling by principals to create expanded time for more reading instruction and reading laboratory availability for all children
  - emphasize the prestige and urgency of the program to his staff

- involve the Board of Education and the community in the Right to Read program
  - carry goals to the local Board of Education
  - carry out public relations task: inform and involve parents and other adults in the community, including local industry, inner-city residents, college-oriented families, unions professional organizations

- structure meaningful in-service programs
  - establish local curriculum centers and materials use training centers
  - enable teachers to retrain themselves to fulfill Right to Read goals
  - focus on local concerns and needs of local teachers
  - coordinate efforts with reading specialists, master teachers

- upgrade library services
  - reallocate priorities of acquisition and service
  - have plenty of books available within reach of every child
  - survey library facilities in each school and measure program against standards
  - allocate a larger share of the instructional budget to library/media programs
  - involve and retrain librarians through in-service seminars and workshops

- recruit and utilize qualified specialists, giving them the freedom to do their job
  - reading specialists, accredited in reading methodology for all levels, not just remedial
  - materials specialists, including certified teachers and school librarians
  - training specialists, for setting up workshops and in-service training programs to update knowledge of new materials and methods

- involve professional organizations
  - include professionals at local, county and state level
  - schedule speakers at meetings of professional groups

- recruit, train and properly utilize volunteers
  - use as instructors in one-to-one settings with children
  - coordinate use of volunteers with professional classroom planning
  - avoid using volunteers as juice and cookie, coat and bathroom monitors

- coordinate all facets of local activity
  - avoid patchwork, fragmented approach by teachers and librarians working independently of each other, duplicating efforts or leaving gaps unfilled

## Supervisors and Curriculum Directors

Leadership and enlightened supervision is the prime responsibility of various specialists and curriculum directors within each local educational system. The supervisor's effectiveness in the Right to Read context relates directly to his own knowledge of and commitment to reading as a number one priority. He must set goals; he is responsible for staff morale, instructional program supervision, in-service training, community relations; he makes an overall contribution to the motivational aspects of the program, for the staff as well as the students.

### Major Steps

- become totally involved with the Right to Read program as a top priority
  - read, observe and gather information about the national and state programs to develop an effective program at the local level

- identify the strengths and weaknesses of the local program
  - by first-hand observation of classrooms, libraries, other learning centers within the schools
  - build and maintain strong ties with the professional reading staff (both reading specialists and librarians) both formally and informally, to form meaningful evaluations of their competence

- if centrally located in an office away from the schools, maintain close communication with individual principals in their buildings
  - principal and supervisor must cooperate and coordinate efforts
  - remember, each principal is the primary catalyst for change within each school

- evaluate on-going reading instruction in each school constantly
  - how relevant is this instruction?
  - is the staff adequately prepared to teach reading effectively?
  - what are the tested results of the current reading program?
  - how can class hours and days be restructured to increase the time allotted for reading instruction?
  - is reading lab experience available to all students -- not just to remedial students? Is there enough library media staff to provide one-to-one motivation services?
  - what resources already available (personnel and materials) could be utilized to provide an excellent program?

- pursue and implement cooperation of other specialists
  - involve a variety of subject matter areas

- update knowledge of new media and their applications
  - attend institutes, summer programs
  - read new books, journal articles

- provide in-service training: identify teacher needs; define and implement objectives relating to specific demands at the local level

- build and maintain good community relations
  - develop fullest use of parents and other adults, community action groups, volunteers
  - place Right to Read goals and priority before special interest groups throughout the year

Board of Education

Local school boards must make policy decisions about the goals of and the methods for achieving new educational programs. It is the primary responsibility of local boards to explain, interpret and sell new educational goals to the public, using a combination of methods. In addition, local boards are responsible for steady, enlightened support of the staffs who design and implement new programs -- in this case, the Right to Read program. Further, boards of education are responsible for such things as checking state laws regarding the use of paraprofessionals in the school. Local school boards provide the proper climate for the successful development of materials and methods for implementing programs that are part of the national educational effort.

Major Steps

- find out what the Right to Read program is
  - how do the local and state efforts relate to the national program?
  - what are specific local deficiencies in the full implementation of every child's Right to Read

- inform all members of the local board of the national and local implications of the Right to Read program
  - utilize newspapers, journals, books, pamphlets
  - utilize meetings of professional and special interest groups

- assess local system's strengths and weaknesses
  - assess the reading resources of the local system -- people and materials
  - visit schools to observe reading programs in progress
  - talk with teachers, librarians, administrators
  - investigate thoroughly, but tactfully, by talking with business leaders and employers about the readers produced
  - weigh results of inspection objectively

- assess local library facilities, particularly at the elementary level
  - if skilled personnel and an abundance of print and non-print materials are not available, determine how to supply them

- coordinate activities with superintendents of schools and other administrative leadership charged with implementing the Right to Read program
  - be tactful; do not become embroiled in personal or professional differences
  - investigate, inform, recommend
  - allow staffs to plan and prepare with freedom

- boards must be fully committed to the Right to Read program as a matter of stated policy

- use all communications resources available
  - public meetings to discuss and clarify goals
  - include widest possible public: cross section of the school staff; outside experts or relevant local speakers
  - request time at public meetings, PTA meetings, teacher meetings

- develop climate within the system to allow professional development
  - encourage innovative approaches to restructuring class time to expand time allotted for reading instruction and for making lab experience available to all children
  - build and maintain staff morale

- assess volunteer program of school district
  - expand or initiate remedial, instructional, motivational programs

- assess programs involving paid aides
  - expand instructional, remedial and enrichment programs
  - aides working under professional direction can assist in planning and preparing programs and can assist in motivational efforts

- assume full responsibility for financing the Right to Read program
  - use federal funds
  - seek out additional potential sources for funding or services
  - involve the community
  - seek out professional support from staff and from community

The PTA

The PTA has direct access to local approaches to implementing the Right to Read goals and indirect access to state and national activities concerned with lobbying for the Right to Read as a national goal. Active members of the PTA can inspect, investigate, ask questions, demand answers, restructure priorities, lobby for action and initiate other activities involved with the Right to Read program. The PTA is a local, intensive force capable of inciting and implementing the Right to Read through its national program, Reading Improvement Services Everywhere (RISE).

Major Steps

- Investigate resources available in local schools
  - get acquainted with teachers, reading teachers and specialists
  - find out what materials and methods are used to teach reading
  - find out whether reading laboratories are available and how many children have access to them

- Lobby and legislate
  - for funds to implement suggestions and demands
  - for restructuring school time to reflect the Right to Read as a top priority, expanding the time allotted to reading instruction and practice
  - for establishing reading laboratory experiences for all children
  - for accreditation of daycare centers and other childcare or placement centers where reading readiness is taught or where reading laboratories are made available

- for establishing local and statewide reading councils

· Set up workshops
  - to investigate new methods and materials to teach reading
  - to train adults as tutors in reading, reading readiness, reading problems
  - to explore motivation and reinforcement methods for readers at all ages and levels of skill

· Locally
  - support and publicize the Right to Read
  - assess local school and public library capabilities and services
  - set up forums to review local school approaches, problems, solutions
  - cooperate with local teachers and librarians to improve school reading programs and reading materials available for practice in local libraries
  - develop pool of tutors and aides among adults and young adults in the community
  - support year-round reading programs

· Parents and individuals
  - give books as gifts to persons of all age levels and encourage book giving on the part of others
  - encourage members of the family to read together; discuss what you read
  - stimulate young children to become interested in books; obtain picture books from libraries and book stores; encourage young children to make up their own stories
  - visit the library with your family and urge everyone to join; encourage children to select their own books from the library; take them to the library for story hours and other special programs
  - have a supply of magazines and books in the home that will interest your children

<u>Teacher Training Institutions</u>

Leadership in restructuring teacher preparation and teacher fulfillment are primary functions of teacher training institutions. The flexibility of teacher training institutions will be reflected in the success of innovative steps taken in the Right to Read program.

Major Steps

· Structure full courses in the teaching of reading, its related problems and solutions
  - no student must graduate without completing such courses; each of the 50 states should require at least one major course (a minimum of three semester hours) in reading methods for both elementary and secondary school teacher certification
  - no graduate must be licensed as an elementary or secondary school teacher without having taken courses in the teaching of reading. Only 10 states and the District of Columbia specifically require a course in teaching reading for licensing elementary school teachers; is your state one of the 10?

- Structure new courses for full-time, in-service positions as reading specialists

- Cooperate with local school systems to provide in-service training for teachers throughout the year
  - assume increased leadership in assisting public school systems in upgrading their teachers' productivity by establishing on-site reading institutes and other mutual interaction programs
  - graduates must be able to come back any time during the year for in-service updating of methods of teaching reading
  - courses or seminars to disseminate the latest educational research to classroom teachers, emphasizing new approaches, the treatment of reading disabilities, motivation and reinforcement

- Share experimental programs developed in universities and educational labs -- their approaches and results -- with teachers

- Maintain professional contact with graduates serving in schools by evaluation and supervision, as well as in-service training
  - keep them informed of new approaches
  - answer their questions; suggest specific solutions to their problems
  - avail them of new research reports
  - summer programs
  - seminars throughout the school year
  - probe their approaches and experiences to provide "real-world" feedback to professors and instructors in the teacher training institutions

- Refocus the overall objectives of the teacher training institutions: emphasize learning theory, applied in practice; deemphasize "education" and "methods"
  - place less importance on language requisites, especially for graduate courses
  - encourage innovative solutions to learning problems as dissertation topics rather than esoteric research

- Update and upgrade instruction available to students in new methods and media
  - stress individualized learning
  - disseminate findings of regional labs
  - foster a team approach to instruction
  - stress the availability of the reading laboratory to provide reading practice to <u>all</u> students, not just remedial reading students
  - upgrade and expand students' exposure to and instruction in handling new media (super-eight films, videotape, cartridge record/playback machines) and encourage them to incorporate new media into their instructional methods

- Show leadership in establishing the Right to Read as a priority, by providing models for restructuring class time to expand the hours available for reading instruction
  - break loose from calendar and clock limitations;
  - encourage innovative restructuring of class hours and days for more effective learning payoffs

## Accrediting Agencies

Accrediting agencies are charged with the responsiblity of providing enlightened, innovative and supportive leadership for statewide programs; as such, they should be attracting young, energetic, imaginative problem-solvers, ready and eager to implement Right to Read goals.

### Major Steps

- Provide constant supervision and clear direction for statewide programs
  - reorient accrediting goals to meet urgent instructional goals (i.e., grant accreditation to daycare centers providing structured, measurable courses in reading readiness; investigate and disseminate workable models for scheduling reading instruction as a top classtime priority, including restructuring class hours and days to expand time allotted to reading instruction and to make reading lab experience and practice available to students at all levels)
  - establish new programs for leaders to allow them professional advancement while solving practical problems (i.e., advancing reading scores or gains)
  - free up graduate work to incorporate new instructional programs and techniques; delete outdated methods and materials courses
  - structure innovative, statewide programs married to the national Right to Read goals, involving libraries, new media, new methodology; provide constant evaluation
  - state specific, measurable requirements for new programs; charge local schools with meeting these requirements

- Free up accrediting process to allow and encourage innovation, provided it remains structured to show evaluation and measurement of gain relating to local needs

- Develop new programs to bring state officials and working teachers into direct contact; designate "master teachers" to work with accrediting boards on a yearly internship basis

- Allow the accrediting experience to be one of self-analysis and revitalization, rather than a repetitious refilling of forms at 5- or 10-year intervals

- Listen to suggestions from the newest to the most established teachers

- Examine tenure; begin dialogue concerning the consequences of revoking or retaining

## TECHNIQUE AND ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS FOR SCHOOL AND PULIC LIBRARIANS

1. Involve a parent or family member whenever possible by scheduling parallel activities; consumer education assistance during the pre-school story hour, or training for mother in following up the story hour.

2. Consult specialists of many kinds in connection with the reading development program; music, drama and recreation specialists can help to develop related helpful rhythms, games, chants.

3. Provide a cassette recorder for reading aloud practice or making up stories, poems, etc.

4. Provide story reading and picture showing sessions in laundary rooms, clinic waiting rooms, welfare offices as well as daycare centers and nursery centers.

5. Encourage mothers who are already conducting "bootleg" (unaccredited and informal) daycare centers at home to check out kits of activity materials for the children they tend, including reading readiness materials, word games, and size, shape and category discrimination puzzles and toys.

6. Construct and disseminate a simple check list for mothers to use in tutoring their own children. Encourage mothers to bring these in to confer with school librarian and reading specialist who might hold joint conference.

7. Provide turntable and headsets for young adults to listen to records of their own that they bring in; place library recordings nearby so they will be able to experiment with new music.

8. Construct "sense collections" of varied tactile materials for the preschooler to handle along with inexpensive art materials for children to experiment with.

9. Take Polaroid pictures of children and family groups whenever possible. Place on bulletin panels around the library. Encourage children and adults from the community to bring samples of poetry, crafts and art -- original or something they like -- for posting.

10. Invite community members in to preview films for purchase; ask task force of parents to read some picture books and review them for other parents.

11. Probe local gathering places -- markets, clinics, second-hand stores -- to find out who can come to the library when, what spots could be used by library personnel for brief programs or to teach skills.

12. Inventory community for people with skills -- a roving knitter might go to a laundry room with a bag of knitting books or pamphlets to share and check out to interested women.

13. Consider some "offbeat" materials to circulate: such as dress patterns with sewing books.

14. Devise and enforce a simple "warmth and courtesy" checklist for every library worker to ensure that each user or potential user is greeted, referred, assisted and encouraged every time he enters the library.

15. If community is multi-lingual, encourage and train one or more residents in holding simple conversation courses in connection with multi-lingual films, concerts, plays and displays.

16. Train mothers, volunteers, aides or paraprofessionals to elicit stories from preliterates in pictured or painted form -- even dictated form. Later each student could begin to expand his description with more words and finally tell or write story for public presentation.

17. Hold buzz sessions among varied age groups learning to read or in process of improving their reading for a specific purpose. Hold "testimonial" sessions about job upgrading or skill improvement due to reading improvement. Keep "press releases" and photos in library for display of people doing new jobs, winning scholarships or new opportunities.